

# Miami-Dade Schools Serve Local Fruits and Veggies for Fresh Attitude Week

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A cafeteria worker preps fruit for students.

*Courtesy of Miami-Dade Schools*

For most of us, memories of school cafeteria cuisine include the likes of mini milk cartons, mystery meat, and that glorious treat known as pizza Friday. But schools today are upping their nutrition game, and Miami-Dade is at the front of the pack.

**Miami-Dade County Public Schools** and the Urban School Food Alliance have partnered with the French Department of Agriculture for Fresh Attitude Week, which launched this past Monday, May 9. The idea is to highlight fresh, delicious fruits and vegetables in school meals.

The six participating school districts – New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, and Florida's Orange County, in addition to Miami – will initiate efforts such as serving new fresh fruits and vegetables during breakfast and lunch; offering fresh, unique salads; highlighting student-created vegetable recipes; hosting farmers' visits to teach students about farm-to-school efforts; and showcasing food art in cafeterias.

"Florida zucchini and squash salad are new vegetables added to the menu for Fresh Attitude Week, and we are promoting vegetable sides offered throughout the year and highlighting them this week: baby carrots, grape tomatoes, romaine and spinach salad, and Florida-grown corn and green beans," says Penny Parham, Miami-Dade director of food and nutrition.



Kids hold up leafy greens for Fresh Attitude Week.

*Courtesy of Miami-Dade Schools*

Veggies and salads are already an important part of school menus, Parham adds.

"We have a significant school garden partnership with the Education Fund in Miami-Dade, creating strong garden-to-cafeteria-to-classroom connections, and Fresh Attitude Week fits right in with the work we do all school year to promote eating fresh – and with our school gardens, the vegetables may have been grown by the students themselves! Our school-gardens partnership promotes healthy eating in the classroom and connects nutrition information with healthy options in the school cafeteria, and Fresh Attitude Week is a great opportunity to continue to promote these activities and choices."

And considering how svelte the French tend to be, partnering with our European neighbors is probably a wise idea. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years**. So the more fruits and veggies that make it to kids' plates, the better.

"We are always promoting healthy-eating options in Miami-Dade, and Fresh Attitude Week is another great opportunity to showcase fresh vegetables for our students in their school meals, from their school gardens and on menus this week and year-round," Parham adds.

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